



March 7, 2013

To: Senator Goeff Hansen
Members of the Senate Outdoor Recreation & Tourism Committee

My name is Chuck May and I am a private citizen from Portage Lake Harbor, Onkama, Michigan. I am also a recreational boater, a member of the Portage Lake Harbor Commission, and since February, 2008 the Chair Pro Tem of the Great Lakes Small Harbors Coalition (GLHSC). The Coalition was established in early 2008, initially among Michigan harbors, to advocate for sufficient resources to maintain navigational access to federally authorized recreational harbors through adequate dredging. It later expanded to invite the collective voices of citizens from all 112 federal harbors throughout the Great Lakes states and now represents the 56 federal harbors of Michigan and over 100 Great Lakes coastal communities and advocate organizations in five states (totaling over 3 million citizens) that have passed official resolutions in support of our mission.

Due to the lack of maintenance dredging and record low water levels, our harbors are silting in and in many cases closing. This is a true crisis and represents not only a significant economic loss for the State of Michigan and its coastal communities, but also a serious threat to health and human safety.

To recap the present crisis situation, Michigan has 56 harbors that have historically been maintained by the federal government, but 51 have been deprioritized in recent years and literally "cut adrift" as a consequence of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget shortfalls. The only federal harbors in Michigan that the Administration currently considers high enough priority to be funded (i.e. ship/receive at least 1 million tons) are Grand Haven, Muskegon, Alpena, Marquette, and Presque Isle (exceptions have also been made for Manistee, Holland, and St. Joe due to coal powered plants). For over a decade, our Michigan federal harbors have been barely sustained by an intravenous drip of earmarks. Now even that has been completely shut off and harbors have not been dredged for over three years.

Compounded in a big way by the recent low water levels, this is a dire emergency and a crisis facing our Michigan communities, private marinas, and our "Pure Michigan" image and tourism. Literally, if our harbors are the front doors to Michigan then we are facing community after community that is going to be "closed for business" this summer. The spiraling effect of harbors being closed is already being felt by marinas, hotels, rentals, etc. as tourists and boat owners delay their travel plans pending water access.

Without emergency funding from the State for dredging, harbor after harbor community, business after business will be endangered or no longer remaining viable. The impact of this crisis will be felt throughout our "Great Lakes State" as this sudden change in our way of life touches family after family.

We can document actual loss of life and property resulting from inadequately dredged recreational harbors in Michigan. We can also document the economic impact to Michigan and our communities. According to a recent study the recreational boaters using these Great Lakes harbors in Michigan generate an annual economic impact of \$3 billion and support 21,000 jobs in the State. From an appropriation perspective, these 51 harbors can be kept open and their communities kept viable with the emergency and on-going annual funding of \$12 million. When combined with state marina and waterway needs, a total emergency funding of \$21 million to \$30 million is needed for 2013. Therefore, on behalf of the 350,000 citizens living in these harbor communities and the literally million or more who visit or trailer a boat to these harbors, we collectively ask for your support in appropriating the badly needed emergency funds for dredging the harbors and state waterways of Michigan this spring and summer.

Timing is critical to have Michigan's harbors and waterways open this year. We sincerely appreciate the collective effort of the members of the Senate Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Committee to expedite the appropriation/bills needed to keep this crisis situation from deeply impacting the State's economy and the lives of so many.

Thank you for your attention to this emergency issue. I would be happy to testify in person or supply further information as you may need.

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